OUR FAITH

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A Christmas Prayer

O Thou whose gift in the new-born Christ is the Spirit of Community with one another and with Thee, this day we would gladden our eyes with the light of the star that still but dimly shines, we would rejoice our ears with the music of a long-lost angel's song. We are not as if Thou hadst never been, but we are still as the voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

O thou Star of Hope, thou art our only peace. Not in what we have thus far done do we find rest, not in our desertion of the struggle, not in our withdrawal from the world to a place apart. The only peace we know is the peace of him who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. We seek from thee the peace that rests upon the faces of those who in the darkness are turned toward the dawn that shall not fail.

O thou Spirit of Community, be thou our Star of Hope. Not upon the seas that separate is our desire set, nor on the walls that divide us one from another. From every self-centered impulse we would be delivered this day. Strengthen within us the bond that binds each man to his fellow. Write upon the heart of each the law that is common to every heart. Join each to each and each to all by the rule of mutual love. For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders. Strengthen this day the authority of good will. Kindle everywhere the fires of fellowship and the cause of cooperation for the common good. In our unshaken faith that Thou didst make us to be one in Thee; we would rise above the ruins of our failures, confident that some future day shall heed the song which now the angels sing. By the power of thine everlasting grace, so let it be. Amen.

(R. G. S.)

Christmas

Christmas is not a fancy—dream-spun and heart-woven—but a fact, a faith, a force. It is gentle but irresistible. As man has discovered in nature new potencies, new elements, new depths, new forces, so also in the realm of spiritual reality there have been revealed to him new dimensions of truth and fellowship and love. These are the spiritual beacons of a life that yet shall be.

Some day man shall live in a peaceful world where moral intelligence and practical good will reign. Of this day, Christmas is prophetic.

Why do we live one day by the law of love, and then turn again to rend each other? Why do we yield to his spirit on Christmas Day, and then forget? The explanation is not complex. Christmas is prophetic of what every day may be—when the mind that was in Jesus is also in us. This is the dream that keeps human hope alive. This is the dream of "peace on earth, good will toward men."

E. B.

The Eternal Mystery

W. WALDER W. ARGOW
(Minister, First Unitarian Church, Baltimore, Md.)

Because the Christmas story is legend therefore it is true! The genius of legend is that it portrays truth more certainly and

commandingly than logic or philosophic deduction. It is the language of feeling breaking into syllables of human speech, and presenting in dramatic form what the heart senses is true about our mortal life. Hence the Christmas story is a dramatization of life's greatest fact—that man is the incarnation of God! No other legend embodies such dynamic, revolutionary truth. Who is sufficiently gifted to imagine what will happen to man on that day when he makes the astounding discovery that he and God are one! Fear will vanish, inhumanity will cease, war will be forgotten, impotency will be transformed into courage, the springs of mighty powers will burst forth! Already that day has come for a few pioneer souls; it is coming today to an ever increasing number; and it will continue to come for countless more as each discovers the little God-baby slumbering within. To what more glorious duty can each dedicate himself than to bring to maturity the God-child in his life! Only here and there has the God within grown to manhood; while for the vast majority He is still a helpless babe, which a moment of careless neglect will destroy.

O fact-wearied world; it is not wisdom to be wise in logic. 'Tis wisdom alone to believe the heart! Forever it is true that, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be!"

Christmas and the Bible Fairy-Stories

From the writings of
GEORGE R. DODSON
(Former Minister, Church of the Unity, St. Louis, Mo.)

The question is often asked why Unitarians keep the Christmas festival of joy and love. Though, with many others, we recognize that the gospel stories of the nativity are not history, but are early Christian folk tales, or, as a little girl called them, "the Bible fairy stories," we still love these stories. Why? Because they are beautiful poetry. Humanity always sees its heroes through the glorifying haze of admiration and affection. Cradle miracles are related not only of Bible heroes but of Gautama the Buddha, the Light of Asia, and many others whose lives are seen in the light of gratitude and love.

When belief in Santa Claus is outgrown, there is often a temporary sense of loss, but the children gain more than they lose in learning the truth, for Santa Claus lives on,—not as literal fact, but as the symbol of Christmas love and joy. So with the birth legends about Jesus. As Dr. Gannett has finely said, not a carol is hushed by the truth. The birth story is not a fact to be believed, but beautiful poetry to be enjoyed. It is "the poem of the mother and child, the poem of the coming of the spirit of love."

Christmas is the festival of love and good-will and of happiness-giving. It is fitting that we should keep it in memory of Jesus, that great lover of men, and we are glad to realize that

"These songs did the human heart make,
To glorify the birth of the child,
When he had become a great and holy prophet,
A teacher and redeemer, precious to men."

I Am the Christmas Spirit

I come into the home of poverty and cause pale-faced children to open their eyes in happy wonder.

I keep romance alive in the heart of youth, and brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic.

I prompt eager feet to climb dark stairways with filled baskets, leaving behind hearts amazed at the goodness of life.

I move the prodigal to pause a moment on his wild wasteful way, and send to anxious loved ones some little token that releases glad tears—tears which wash away the hard lines of sorrow.

I enter dark prison cells, reminding scarred humanity of what might have been, and pointing forward to good days yet to be.

I come softly into still rooms of pain, and lips that are too weak to speak just tremble in wordless, eloquent gratitude.

In a thousand ways I cause the weary world to look up into the face of God, and for a little moment at least forget the things that are small and wretched.

For I am the Christmas Spirit.

(E. C. Baird)

The Voice of Christmas

I cannot put the Presence by, of him, the Crucified,
Who moves men's spirits with his love as doth the moon the tide;
Again I see the Life he lived, the godlike Death he died.

Again I see upon the cross that great Soul-battle fought,
Into the texture of the world the tale of which is wrought,
Until it hath become the woof of human deed and thought.

I cannot put his presence by, I meet him everywhere;
I meet him in the country town, the busy market square;
The Mansion and the Tenement attest his presence there.

He comes to break the barriers down raised up by barren creeds;
About the globe from zone to zone, like sunlight he proceeds;
He comes to give the World's starved heart the perfect love it needs.

(Harry Kemp)

From Nazareth

Opinions change. Philosophies destroy one another. Fashions of thought follow empires in the swift descent from proud place to silent dust. But man remains what Plato called him, the spectator of eternity; and what Christ called him, the chosen child of the Most High. He is stirred by august expectations. He is visited by mighty hopes. He hears the word of Beauty. He is summoned by the compelling voice of unselfish love. Because he is such, he will look forever with wonder upon the soul that came forth from Nazareth and when he is at his best will rise up and answer the call to make our tormented world a habitation of peace and a kingdom of God.

(William L. Sullivan)

In the Image of God

CHARLES E. PARK
(Minister Emeritus, First Church, Boston, Mass.)

An old gentleman was asked what he considered the most convincing evidence of God's reality. He answered: Those things in me of which I am proudest, but for which I cannot account. Of course one could retort that there was not a single thing in him for which he could account; yet we know what he meant. Most of the marvels of our being are so familiar that they have lost their weight as evidences of God. As Martineau says: "The very nearness and custom of his presence hide him from our infirm and sinful hearts." But some of those marvels persistently resist the contempt which familiarity breeds. Biology claims it can account for many of our powers, especially the ones like the shortness of reaction-time or the sudden access of strength that comes with sudden danger. These have great survival value in the struggle for existence. But such things as sentiments, generosities, susceptibilities to beauty and great thoughts and refinements of feeling, which not only have no survival value but are a practical expense to a man in his struggle for existence, leave biology bewildered. They cannot be accounted for on the score of necessity, or racial experience, or even training. Yet there they are: the things in me of which I am proudest, but for which I cannot account. Who put them there, and why? We can only whisper: God, for reasons of his own.

The Power of God in the Human Soul

CARL A. SEAWARD
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The mysteries of the character of God and the divinity of God in the human soul are unsolved. Yet, the lack of true and detailed identification in nowise minimizes the power of God or the power of the soul-life of the individual.

There is easy reference to the Power of God in nature. Dashing waves beating against the shores of eternity; mountain peaks piercing the clouds; the gorgeous painting on the western horizon at the end of the day; the invigorating atmosphere of a crisp morning; the very beauty, law and order of the universe—all these speak of the power of the Eternal Creator, the First Principal of All Life, God. When we observe nature and the starry and moonlit

heavens we say that God is there; that what we observe and feel is God's handiwork—not ours. God is all that existed before man, all that is now, and all that will ever be. The power of God is in all nature, the firmament, and in the highest form of all earthly life, man.

Most certainly, the divinity of God is in man. But man does not always discover the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit. Recognizing the power of God in the universe, man is slow to discover the power of God resident in himself.

In an age of gigantic power of outward forces of nature, harnessed by men for bringing greater physical satisfactions, the life of the spirit is having a hard time. Despite the prolific development in the field of philosophy, psychology, and general culture, made for the development of personality, the **inner life of man** is but a weakling before outward power. The fact is, the best energies of mankind are expended in developing materialistic power. This is symbolized by the race for uranium deposits. Thousands of explorers and scientists seek to get control of the material which will provide the fuel for exploding the most powerful energy yet placed in the hands of man—atomic power. What an impression the divinity of God in mankind would make for world salvation if thousands of prophets of religion, of the calibre of the Hebrew prophets and the Christian apostles, went on an expedition to discover and develop the power of God within the human souls of civilization!

The efforts being given to discover and manipulate vast material power of the universe go on, while scientific search and disciplines necessary for the discovery of God in the human soul are being overlooked and neglected.

A Surgeon's Faith

"Assuredly, I believe in God. That is perhaps the sole and single article of my creed. . . .

"Believing in God, I believe, too, in a soul. I believe in its reality and in its eternal progression. I cannot subscribe to an ancient belief that the soul is mortal. That elusive spark which makes all the difference between the quick and the dead and which no machine seems able to fabricate **must** live on in perpetuity, else Nature herself mocks us with her rotation of the seasons, and all emotion is fallacious with its antithesis of hope and despair, courage and weakness, success and failure.

"Nearly forty years of surgical experience have gone to shape this creed. . . .

"This far have I come. On this ground I stand. It is firm rock under my feet, firm enough, I trust and hope, so that the hand I would stretch in comfort and courage to those who stand in the valley of the shadow of Death does not shake."

Concluding words of A Surgeon's World by Max Thorek (J. B. Lippincott Co., Seventh Imp., 1948).

If God Goes

"Once you cease to believe in God, you cease to believe in the importance of man. If he has been cast accidentally on to the shores of time and if there is no God to whom he is responsible, the race goes to the swift and the battle goes to the strong and the State may sweat, exploit, or oppress a man with impunity. If God goes, the State will occupy the vacuum which has been created, and man instead of worshipping God, will be called upon to worship the omnicompetent State. . . ."

(Maldwyn Edwards in the London "Quarterly Review")

It's just the little human touch
That makes the game worthwhile.
The little helpful word of praise,
The small and cheery smile.

—Edmund Leamy

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